

Profile: LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library System

The LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library System (LCLCPLS), headquartered in Tallahassee, Florida, provides a dynamic resource for creative and intellectual pursuits, enabling residents to live a life of learning, and enriches the community by inspiring a love of reading. Its collections, services and programs strive to meet the needs and interests of a diverse service area population of approximately one-quarter million county residents.

Both the library system and its user base continue to grow. While the 2000 U.S. Census reported the county's population as 239,452, the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research estimated that Leon County's population had grown to 255,500 by 2003. Sixty-three percent of the population resides in Tallahassee and the remaining 37% live in unincorporated and rural areas. To meet the needs of residents, library services are currently provided at six facilities and with one bookmobile. Services are also available remotely through the library's web site; users can reserve, renew and request library materials, ask reference questions through e-mail or the "Ask a Librarian" service, and use library online databases.

The library system dates from 1956, when the first free public library was opened in Tallahassee. Service was expanded through the establishment of a small community branch in 1975, and the system continued to grow through the addition of three storefront branches between 1991-1997. In 2000 and 2001 two permanent branches were opened, replacing their respective area storefronts. The newest branch, built near the site of the busiest bookmobile stop in rural western Leon County, was opened in February 2004. Two storefront branches remain. Plans are in place for permanent buildings for each, the first to be completed in 2006.

LCLCPLS has an operating budget of approximately \$5.3 million with a staff of 115 FTEs. The library maintains a collection of over 300,000 titles and has an annual circulation slightly over 2 million. The library system is governed by the Leon County Board of County Commissioners. The Board authorizes the library budget and approves selected policies and procedures. Additional support is provided by two groups: the Library Advisory Board, comprised of seven citizen members, reviews policies and aids in decision making; and the Friends of the LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library is an active fund-raising group for the library.

The library system enjoys partnerships with Literacy Volunteers of Leon County and Leon County Schools Adult & Community Education, local providers of instruction in basic literacy, GED training and English for Speakers of Other Languages. Library staff and resources support the community through a variety of programs and projects, such as science education programs in partnership with Florida State University's National High Field Magnetic Laboratory and assistance with the development of a reading room at the Boys and Girls Club. Annual programs include a reading festival, Seniors Appreciation Day, and a summer reading program. The library system has been formally recognized more than five times with the Florida Library Association's Betty Davis Miller Award for excellence in services to youth.